

Representative. Slaughter is proud to have supported the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA, P.L. 111-148, March 23, 2010). Health care reform will dramatically improve the quality of health care services for seniors, reduce prescription drug costs, and improve access to preventative services.

### **Strengthening Medicare**

The Patient Protection Act will improve the quality, accessibility, and solvency of Medicare. Health care reform ends out-of-pocket service charges for preventive services such as the flu vaccine, mammograms, and colonoscopy. The new law will also extend the solvency of Medicare by weeding out waste and achieving payment parity between traditional and private Medicare plans. In addition, the Patient Protection Act incentivizes provider coordination through new payment systems.

### **Closing the Donut Hole**

The Patient Protection Act closes the donut hole, the gap in coverage under Medicare Part D that forces seniors to cover drug costs out-of-pocket. Seniors who reach the donut hole in 2010 will receive a \$250 check to cover drug costs. In 2011, a 50% discount will be provided by drug companies. By the end of the decade the donut hole will close completely. An estimated 9,000 seniors in my district will save an average of \$700 in 2011 and more than \$3,000 in 2020.

### **Helping Early Retirees by Helping Employers**

Many people retire before the age of 65, forcing them to buy expensive insurance plans or go without coverage before Medicare benefits begin. Employers sometimes fill this gap but many companies can't afford this expense. Over the past 20 years the number of employers providing plans to retirees has fallen drastically – from 66% in 1988 to just 31% in 2008. Health care reform provides \$5 billion in financial assistance to employers to help them maintain coverage for early retirees 55 and older who are not yet eligible for Medicare. Beginning on June 21 of this year, this temporary program will fill the gap before the health insurance exchanges are established in 2014.

### **Helping older adults to access long-term care and home care**

The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act established a national voluntary insurance program for working individuals to help them pay for home care and other services. This program will help participants to stay in their homes.

### **Representative Slaughter's Work on Prescription Drug Costs**

Representative Slaughter is a long-time champion for seniors and working families who are struggling to pay for prescription drugs. In 2003, Rep. Slaughter opposed the Medicare Modernization Act, including the prescription drug plan, as it failed to provide meaningful relief for seniors, while providing excessive benefits to drug companies. From the "donut hole" provision that required seniors to pay significant out of pocket costs, to the restrictions placed on the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) so they could not negotiate lower price drugs for our seniors, the Medicare Part D plan has been a debacle since its conception. Health care reform will correct many of these problems. During the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress, Rep. Slaughter against legislation that would have increased Medicare Part B premiums; she also sponsored legislation to provide needed relief to seniors as there was no Social Security cost of living adjustment (COLA) in 2010.

Rep. Slaughter has long supported efforts to provide all seniors with a prescription drug benefit through the Medicare program. In order to focus public attention on this problem, Rep. Slaughter saw off a group of her constituents as they traveled to Montreal, Canada to purchase their prescriptions at dramatically lower prices in 2000. In the following years, she released three separate reports showing that local seniors and individuals without health insurance paid significantly higher prices for prescription medication than pharmaceutical companies' most favored customers.

Rep. Slaughter also supported the Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act (MIPPA) when it passed in the House of Representatives by a vote of 355- 59 on Jul 15, 2008. MIPPPA amended titles XVIII and XIX of the Social Security Act to extend expiring provisions under the Medicare Program, to improve access to preventive and mental health services, to enhance low-income benefit programs, and to maintain access to care in rural areas, including pharmacy access, and for other purposes.